The number of coaching positions and the number of women qualified to fill them is higher than ever, yet women are still locked out of the coaching profession.

Women are underrepresented in sport leadership positions globally. Well-intentioned efforts have focused on developing individual qualifications and skills.

The Leadership Labyrinth

What constructs and processes have shaped this Coach’s coaching career trajectory?

How has the intersectional nature of these constructs and processes enabled her to navigate the leadership labyrinth?

Case Study Design

Setting
- NCAA Division I Women’s Soccer
- Big 12 Conference
- Program start 1996
- NCAA Postseason 2016

Three Semi-Structured Interviews
- Biographical Interview
- Coaching Practice Interview 1
- Coaching Practice Interview 2
- Coast Reflection

Inductive Content Analysis
- Conceptual categories using a Post-Structural framework
- Categories aligned to Lather and Dovers’s (2012) Ecological-Intersectional Model
Coach continued to wrestle with the juxtapositioning of her coaching philosophy and practice while navigating the leadership labyrinth.

Her experiences suggest that she faces a double bind, that men do not face, in which displays of both masculine and feminine qualities are perceived as important to maintaining effective leadership as a woman coach.

Coach recognized administrative and financial backing as a support and a barrier...

―even though people would say to you, "you got more financial backing that any other. Not any other but most female sports on campus. I am not competing against other female sports on campus; I am competing against the Big 12."

She described the number of women coaches in her organization as "fortunate" and attributed her own success, in part, to "dumb luck" as she was hired when "Title IX was blowing up."
Organizational & Sociocultural Levels

Yet, she believed that her coaching effectiveness was largely shaped by her perspectives as a woman. “I think women are really intuitive to understanding other people’s emotions...women need to be in leadership roles so other girls or young women can see the success they can have.”

SUMMARY
Organizational and Sociocultural Levels

Results tentatively show that men’s and women’s sports were not supported equitably in her organization (“F” ranking in Tucker Report, 2017).

Supporting women in developing more self-serving attributional styles may help to increase self-pride and longevity in a coaching role.

Resonant of soft essentialism beliefs, although Coach highlighted the “uniqueness” of women with good intentions, behaving “like women” is still devalued in coaching, which creates additional challenges in navigating the leadership labyrinth.

Conclusions

In a time when the number of NCAA women head coaches is declining, this Coach’s story is RARE.

Other women coaches may use this story to recognize similar contradictions and challenges to benefit their own coaching journey.

Future Research

Recruit large, diverse samples of longstanding women coaches across sports and competitive levels.

Conduct interviews with stakeholders (assistant coaches, players, administrators).

Thank You!

The Full Article: